Soft loans to fishermen

11. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether National Fishworkers Forum has urged to extend soft loans to fishermen at an interest rate of 6 percent;

(b) if so, whether their proposal has been examined and forwarded to the Ministry of Finance;

(c) if so, their reaction thereto; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) and (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Cost of cotton production in Maharashtra

12. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the input cost to production of one quintal of cotton for farmers in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra;

(b) the extent to which it can fetch in the open market;

(c) whether there is a big gap between the production cost and the selling price;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(e) the steps being taken by Government to stop dumping of highly subsidized cotton from the rich nations in order to save indigenous farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (d) The estimated cost of production of cotton (kapas) for different varieties in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra ranges from Rs. 1795 to Rs. 2181 per quintal for the cotton season 2003-04. The prices of H-4 variety of cotton ranges from Rs. 1960 to Rs. 2130 during 2004-05 and from Rs. 1960 to Rs. 2100 till 10-2-2006.

The prices fluctuate depending upon the quality of the product, market behaviour and demand from the mill sector. In order to ensure remunerative prices to the cotton farmers, minimum support prices (MSPs) for different varieties are fixed by the Government and Public Sector Agencies viz. Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) and NAFED undertake procurement operations to ensure that the farmers do not resort to distress sale.

(e) The import of raw cotton is already under open general license w.e.f. 19-4-1994. A 10 per cent import duty is levied on the import of raw cotton to discourage import of subsidized cotton from other countries. The import of cotton has fallen from 22.13 lakh bales in 2000-01 to 12 lakh bales in 2004-05.

Encouraging youth for farming

13. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a sharp decline in the agriculture sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof, alongwith the drop in the quantum of agricultural produce and the imports made for making up the shortfall;

(c) whether this is attributed to the exodus of farmers in large scale from villages to cities and towns in search of alternative source of living;

(d) if so, the details thereof during the last three years, year-wise and State-wise; and

(e) the steps proposed to be taken to reverse the trend and encourage youth to take up farming?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) According to the advance estimates released by Central Statistical Organisation, the growth rate in the agriculture sector including the allied sectors of forestry, logging and fishing is 2.3 percent in the year 2005-06 as against 0.7 percent in the year 2004-05 at 1999-2000 prices. The estimated annual growth rates of agriculture including the allied sectors of forestry and fishing from 2001-02 to 2005-06 are given below: